

## REGION 6 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TOPIC: Disposal of Syrian Chemical Waste at Veolia, Port Arthur, Texas

DATE: June 16, 2014

CONTACT: Kishor Fruitwala

PURPOSE/ACTION NEEDED: For Information

DEADLINE: Not Applicable

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### BACKGROUND:

Veolia ES Technical Solutions (Veolia) Port Arthur, Texas Treatment Complex is located approximately 10 miles west of Port Arthur, Texas on 3,300 rural acres of which 450 acres are involved in waste activity. Veolia has a commercial incinerator permitted by Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) to handle all six RCRA hazardous waste categories and a permit by EPA to handle PCB wastes. Veolia accepts waste solvents, solvent/oil mixtures, organic and inorganic chemical wastes, pesticide wastes, petroleum wastes, aqueous wastes, contaminated soils and sludge, PCBs and capacitors as well as other wastes. Wastes that are prohibited or limited by permit are: radioactive waste material, explosive material (except class C), dioxin containing wastes, municipal garbage, infectious wastes, and containerized gases with the exception of aerosols. Under contract with the United States Army's Chemical Materials Management Agency to treat or dispose of non-weapons grade chemical agent wastes, Veolia has received waste from Pine Bluff, Arkansas, including cylinders previously containing mustard agent, as well as waste from the Spring Valley Site in Washington D.C., a non-National Priority List (NPL) Formerly Used Defense (FUD) site, which included 300-500 drums of soil contaminated with mustard agent.

On February 14, 2014, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) announced that it awarded one of the two contracts to Veolia to destroy sixteen 20-ft maritime containers of chemical weapons precursor chemicals from Syria, not Syrian chemical weapons themselves or effluent from the destruction of chemical weapons. These industrial chemicals are commonly used throughout the US, and Veolia has extensive experience in handling this type of waste.

### CURRENT STATUS:

On May 17, three Veolia representatives visited Taiko (a Norwegian cargo ship) while it was stationed near Cyprus. Nine (9) of the projected sixteen (16) 20-foot maritime containers were onboard the Taiko, including phosphorus pentasulfide (1); phosphorus trichloride (2); phosphorus oxychloride (2), and hydrogen fluoride (4). The remaining maritime containers (hydrogen fluoride and hydrochloric acid) are still located in Syria.

All of the containers destined for Veolia were deemed compliant with the *International Maritime Dangerous Goods (IMDG)* requirements, except the two containing phosphorus trichloride. Most of the phosphorus trichloride drums had small pools of liquids on top, which had condensed on the inner walls of the 20-foot container. All drums inside these two 20-foot units were returned to Syria for repackaging into new poly 55-gal drums and then overpacked into poly 95-gal drums. After repackaging, there were a total twelve 20-foot containers which included 'clean' containers (7), overpacked drums (3), empty (contaminated) drums (1), and absorbent material (1).

According to the OPCW's press release, the Norwegian freighter Taiko left the Syrian port of Latakia on June 8<sup>th</sup> with the above described 12 containers for Finland and for the United States for disposal of the chemical wastes, and is estimated to arrive in Port Arthur around July 9. Veolia has requested permission to visit Taiko once it arrives in Finland on June 20<sup>th</sup> to inspect the three containers with the overpacked drums. Veolia wants to ensure that the drums were properly repacked in Syria.

The remaining chemicals (seven 20-ft containers), still in Syria, will be shipped at a yet to be determined date from Finland to Port Arthur on a second ship once they can be safely accessed in Syria. This shipment may be on a private vessel, so OGC is looking into any legal/regulatory implications related to use of a private vessel.

On June 9, EPA R6 received a draft environmental assessment (EA) for a special permit application to transport the Syrian waste, issued by DOT's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) for distribution to the stakeholders. On June 11, R6 distributed the PHMSA's draft EA to the Port Arthur local elected officials and the local community. PHMSA planned to publish a Notice of Availability of the EA in the Federal Register on Thursday, June 12<sup>th</sup>, with a brief public comment period of 10 days to accommodate the anticipated schedule.

#### **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS:**

Mitch Osbourne, Veolia Plant Manager has met with the US Coast Guard, Port Arthur Unified Command and the Port Authority as well as the Port of Beaumont to discuss logistics. On April 4, 2014, a Chemical Preparedness Workshop was held in Port Arthur to provide details on the Syrian waste and its destruction by Veolia. Local emergency response officials and Veolia representatives provided information at this meeting. The meeting was also attended by EPA Region 6, the US Customs and Border Protection, and the US Coast Guard. A conference call was held on June 16 between the Unified Command, R6 EPA and Veolia. The next such call is scheduled for June 30<sup>th</sup>. The Unified Command is preparing an Incident Action Plan, scheduled to be ready in about one week.

Veolia's trucking contractor Tri State Motor Transit Company will use five trucks in three loops with a total of 15 truckloads to transport the waste from the port to Veolia. Veolia is working on the transportation route. It is anticipated that the waste will be trucked to the Veolia facility using a route outside the Westside community (see attached map).

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL/ COMMUNITY CONCERNS:**

The Port Arthur community has long standing concerns over air emissions from local industries. Veolia's unique service niche makes it a facility of concern for local residents. The Port Arthur, Texas, Westside community was also the environmental justice showcase project for Region 6. Westside is located in the urban center of the city, near or adjacent to major refineries and chemical plants.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

EPA Region 6 will continue to stay in touch with Veolia, and reach out to the community regarding their concerns related to the disposal of the Syrian waste.